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Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Woman pleads guilty to embezzlement

Brenda Gail Salmons received four years' probation, must repay \$10,000 in restitutions.

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Archives



Reprint



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A former bingo manager at the Vinton Moose Lodge pleaded guilty Monday to embezzling thousands of dollars from the lodge, sources said.

Brenda Gail Salmons, 56, of Hendersonville, N.C., was charged with three counts of embezzlement, each with a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Because of a plea agreement, she received four years' probation and must repay \$10,000 in restitutions. She was also given a five-year suspended prison sentence.

Salmons, who lived in the Roanoke Valley at the time of the crimes, was with the Moose chapter for more than 30 years and was the Instant Bingo manager for several years. She first came under suspicion in September 2001.

The Charitable Gaming Commission then performed several audits and Salmons was indicted on the charges this summer, said assistant commonwealth's attorney for Roanoke County, John Alexander.

Lodge finance manager Donna Farmer said Salmons was required to fill out a form each night showing the net profit from the games that had been played. Farmer said she and the gaming manager caught Salmons turning in a form that was missing a game called "Moonshine" from the night's roundup.

In addition, the gaming commission found discrepancies in the profits from games that were reported. For example, the game might make \$400 but only \$350 was recorded on the form, Farmer said.

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Of the underreported money, the total believed to have been embezzled was almost \$25,000, Farmer said. But the lodge itself came up with 130 to 140 games missing in their records over the past three years, making the possible total upwards of \$70,000.

"We went back and found quite a few games missing," Farmer said.

She said the incident has caused much distress among lodge members. Now, they check the logs and records meticulously.

"It made us to where we don't trust anybody anymore," she said.

Farmer said the money was not taken from the lodge, it was taken from the community. She worries that the lodge, which donates to charities and operates angel trees and gift basket programs, will not be able to do as much this Christmas.

"It lessens what we're able to do for the community this holiday," Farmer said. "We felt the impact. We have definitely felt it."

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